

Ptolemies and Seleucids

• In Egypt dominant over Israel and later Syria with greater power

11:5

• Ptolemy I and Seleucus I

After Alexander's empire broke into pieces, eventually two lines of rulers became especially powerful. One of them was the 'Ptolemies' in Egypt in the south. These 'Ptolemies' were dominant over Israel for just over a century. There was Ptolemy I (323–283 BC), Ptolemy II (283–246 BC), Ptolemy III (246–221 BC), Ptolemy IV (221–204 BC), Ptolemy V (204– 181 BC). Their power over Israel was lost in 201 BC.

The other important line was that of the Seleucids. They were a line of Greek rulers in Syria, further north up the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea. The first was Seleucus I (312–280 BC; his struggle for power began in 323 BC); he was one of those who took over part of Alexander's empire. He was followed by Antiochus I (280–261 BC) and Antiochus II (261–246 BC), Seleucus II (246–226 BC) and Seleucus III (226– 223 BC). This line of kings was not at first dominant over Israel, although later they came to have greater power.

Daniel 11:5 refers to Ptolemy I and Seleucus I. *'The king of the south will increase in power, but one of his officers will be stronger than he and his dominion will be a great dominion.'* The king of the south^{□1} is Ptolemy I or 'Ptolemy Soter, son of Lagus'. He would come to power in 322 BC and declare himself king in 305 BC. One of his officers was Seleucus I. He had at first been ruler in Babylonia but his kingdom was attacked by Antigonus (governor of Asia Minor). Seleucus fled to Egypt and became one of Ptolemy's generals. Later Seleucus recovered Babylonia and eventually ruled a greater empire than Ptolemy's.

□1 11:5

11:6

• Ptolemy II and Antiochus II

Daniel 11:6 refers to Ptolemy II and Antiochus II (the prophecy passes over Antiochus I). *'Then after some years they shall make an alliance, and the daughter of the southern king will go to the northern king to make an agreement. But she will not be able to hold on to her power nor will his power last out; she will be given up, as will those who escorted her and the one who fathered her and sustained her in those times.'*

Ptolemy II (283–246 BC), also called Ptolemy Philadelphus, had a daughter named Berenice. About half a century after the events of Daniel 11:5, Ptolemy II arranged for Berenice to marry Antiochus II (261–246 BC). The arranged marriage was an attempt to get agreement and harmony between the two kingdoms, the Ptolemies in the south and the Seleucids in the north. Antiochus divorced his first wife Laodice in order to marry Berenice. However, the scheme did not work. 'She will not be able to hold on to her power', said the angel. Berenice was not able to stand against the rivalry of the previous wife, Laodice. Two years after the marriage Ptolemy II died and Antiochus went back to his first wife, Laodice. She then poisoned her husband Antiochus II, and her son Seleucus killed Berenice.

• The detail shows that God knows every detail of the future

The point of all this fairly minute prophetic and symbolic detail is that God knows every detail of the future, and everything that is to happen fits in somehow with his plan. The people of Israel will not always know why God is allowing what is happening, but they can know from the beginning that all is controlled and all is co-operating with the kingdom that God is eventually about to bring.

11:7-8

• Ptolemy III – a branch from her roots

Daniel 11:7–8 refers to Ptolemy III and Antiochus II. *'A branch from her roots will rise up to take her place. He shall come against the army and enter the fortress of the king of the north. He shall take action against them and prevail.'* 'A branch from her roots' means 'A person from her family'. It does not say 'Someone from her'. It says 'a **branch** from her **roots**'. The language is very exact since the person was Berenice's brother, Ptolemy

• *Antiochus II – the king of the north*

Euergetes. He was not someone descending from her but someone coming from the same parentage yet in a different branch. Ptolemy Euergetes (Ptolemy III) came against the army of the Seleucids in the north. The ‘king of the north’ was Antiochus II. Ptolemy III was victorious against his enemies and put to death Laodice who was responsible for the murder of his sister.

⁸‘He will seize their gods, their metal images and their valuable articles of silver and carry them off to Egypt. For some years he will refrain from attacking the king of the north.’ Ptolemy III Euergetes returned to Egypt with many trophies of victory including Syrian idols. Then for a number of years, as the prophecy said, he refrained from further attacks on the Syrian north.

11:9 -10

• *Seleucus Callinicus II*

⁹‘Then the king of the north shall come into the kingdom of the king of the south, but he shall return to his land.’ In Syria the son of Laodice and the murdered Antiochus II was Seleucus Callinicus II (who ruled during 246 to 226 BC). He invaded Egypt where Ptolemy III was ruling but he was defeated and returned to Syria.

¹⁰‘His sons shall be aroused to make war. They will gather a multitude of great military forces. He will set out and flow into the land like a flood and cross its borders. Then he will repeatedly rouse himself for battle until he reaches the southern king’s fortress.’

• *Seleucus Ceraunus and Antiochus the Great (as he was eventually called)*

The sons of Seleucus Callinicus II were Seleucus Ceraunus and Antiochus the Great (as he was eventually called). They invaded Egypt. The sentence switches from the plural to the singular. Seleucus Ceraunus was killed in 223 BC and Antiochus the Great carried on the conflict without his brother. Eventually he reached the fortress of the king of Egypt – but by this time the ‘southern king’ had changed. It was now Ptolemy IV (221–203 BC) whose fortress was reached.

Predictions in outline

• *Immense assurance*

All of this is predicted in outline fashion, mentioning no names. As believing Israelites saw these things being fulfilled it would give them immense assurance that the coming of the kingdom of God was drawing near according to its divinely planned schedule.



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